



Saving Home Energy Dollars

Making smart energy choices around the house doesn't require a huge investment of time or money. Below are some easy things you can do today to conserve your home energy use.

Lighting

Turn off lights when you aren't using them. One 100-watt bulb left on all night costs about \$25 over 12 months.

Switch to compact fluorescent lamps (CFLs). CFLs use about a fourth as much electricity and last 10 times longer than traditional light bulbs. The EPA estimates that a typical household saves about \$80 each year by switching to CFLs throughout the house.

Water

The water heater is the second largest energy user in the home because you're charged for the water, and you're charged for heating it. So don't buy one that's larger than your family's needs and turn your water heater's thermostat down to 120°F.

Also be sure to take shorter showers and install a water-saving showerhead, which uses one-third to one-half the water of a regular showerhead.

Air Conditioner/Heat Pump

The cost of heating and cooling a home represents your largest energy expense. Ensure that your equipment is in proper working order - have a professional tune up and inspect your unit regularly. Proper maintenance can save up to 10% on heating and cooling costs.

You also need to keep an eye on your filter. A clogged or dirty filter is far less efficient than a clean one.

Cooling

Use ceiling fans - they make people feel about four degrees cooler - and install a programmable thermo-

stat. Be sure it is programmed to automatically turn down the cooling when you aren't at home or when you're sleeping.

You should also consider setting your thermostat at 78°F or higher during the summer - you save three to five percent on your air conditioning cost for each degree you raise the thermostat.

Heating

Check if cold air is getting into your house. If your house is dirty, you may need additional insulation. You should also use drapes - opening them during the daytime and closing them at night - which will reduce drafts and lower your heating bill. Also consider weatherstripping your windows and sealing air leaks in doors.

Appliances

Every appliance has two price tags - initial cost and operating cost. Consider purchasing ENERGY STAR appliances, which will, in most cases, significantly lower the second, larger price tag. For example, replacing a refrigerator bought in 1990 or earlier with an ENERGY STAR model will save enough energy to light the average household for over 4.5 months. Additionally, "unplugging" older, unused refrigerators can save about \$130 per year.

And, contrary to popular belief, using a dishwasher uses *less* water than washing by hand, especially if you leave the water running!

Laundry

Wash laundry in cold water instead of hot. Hot water only needs to be used for very dirty loads. Only wash full loads and use air-drying to cut down on energy costs. Also be sure to clean the lint filter after every dryer load.

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